1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
EZ6 Malta EZ6

F. The Farmer in Maltese Rural Society

241 571 A study of the Maltese farmer within the total of agriculture in the Islands must include a consideration of the individual as a member of the community in which he lives, works and thinks.

The total social environment of the Maltese countryman may be seen as three concentric circles - family, village, and 'Malta'.

241 619 To the Gozitan who has never crossed the sea to Malta and to the old countryman for whom Valletta is a foreign world, the concept of 'Malta' is something large and indeterminate. But even for most of the rural population, for whom Valletta and the towns are becoming a familiar part of experience, the Islands are large enough for the countryman to feel none of the claustrophobia of which visitors to Malta complain. The 'National' unit is large enough for him to speak of *'Il-Gvern'* - the Government, of which he has heard frequently, though imprecisely, on all sides and on which he blames many of his economic and social problems with a characteristic disregard for logic or even fact. This concept of *Gvern* is of importance in an appreciation of rural thought in Malta. In it no very clear distinction is made between Maltese Government and the Imperial side of the Dyarchy. Neither is allegiance to one or other of the political parties very significant, for personality is always more important than party.

[178] To give an historical perspective to this attitude of the remoteness of *Gvern* one may see in it not only the product of foreign British rule since 1800 but also the legacy of the 'paternal' government of the Knights of St. John during their previous two and a half centuries in the Islands. Rural communities are characteristically conservative.

793 The other Malta-wide authority is that of the Church, but the summit of this is scarcely less remote to the individual than is *Gvern*. In the normal practice of his Religion the countryman leans directly on his local priests, though the Curia and Archbishop in Malta and the Bishop in Gozo do represent, for him, the essential unity that is the Maltese Church.

241 198 369 Within the framework of 'Malta' the distinction between the conurbation of towns, centred on Valletta, and the countryside is crucial. This 'conurbation' may be defined as those census districts with less than 3 per cent. of their working population engaged in farming. In 1948, this accounted for all districts bordering on either the Grand or Marsamxett Harbours together with the adjoining residential suburb of St. Julians (1). Outside this urban area, the farming element in the working population increases towards the west and north of Malta, although only in Mgarr does it pass 50 per cent. In Gozo, the scene is notably more 'rural', on the basis of this definition, with six of the 12 census districts having more than half their working population engaged in agriculture.

[463] A survey of parallel information in censuses over the past 100 years shows a declining farming element along with a diversification of the occupational structure - especially in those villages regarded as traditional strongholds of agriculture.

This trend to economic diversification has been accompanied by a break away from the former social homogeneity of these rural villages. In fact, economic and social change cannot be considered each in isolation. In Malta, change - in its widest sense - has spread into the countryside from the conurbation. The tempo of this process has accelerated rapidly since the 1939-45 war, which brought town and country together more than ever before and shook the foundations of the cleavage between 'peasant villager' and 'urban townsman', a key feature in the social geography of the Maltese Islands. The appearance of schools, amenities - particularly transport, and a degree of occupational choice, have enabled the countryman to sample a more 'urban' way of life and culture and this has produced a dissatisfaction with rural society as it has been. Maltese countrymen knew they were regarded, as a class, as low in the social scale of urban opinion. They accepted this fatalistically and were in fact able to view

1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
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their designation with a certain tolerant wisdom. Not so the present young generation in the farming community for whom education and material facilities have presented the chance of escape from a social inferiority complex.

The village was traditionally the community-group in rural Malta. Contact with the towns and Valletta was limited, especially for the villages of the west and in Gozo, until buses, press and rediffusion narrowed the gulf, but it was hardly less than the contacts between the villages themselves. The village was the group for most social interaction. Currently, the trend is towards a Malta-wide community-group in which villages are losing much of their isolation, although there is very little uniformity in this process. Sub-urban villages are clearly absorbing non-rural characteristics much more quickly than is the case in outlying parts of the Islands.

The nucleus of village life is the Church and the first citizen is the Parish Priest. The Priest combined teaching and general advisory duties with his spiritual role (see Chapter VI C). He was also the main link with the world outside the village through his relaying of general news from his pulpit. Normally, land transfers and a wide variety of matters connected with the agricultural cycle were announced by the Priest. The Church was the social meeting place and the basis of institutionalised activity. Even the village *festa*, that single day of wild exuberance, noise, fire-works, procession and carnivalesque has as its pretext a religious observance such as the honouring of the particular Saint of the village or the National Feast of the Shipwreck of St. Paul. In all this, the link between Priest and people was often further cemented by wide kinship connexions within the village. The son of an illiterate farmer might progress through Seminary and University to return to his home village as a priest and to be claimed as a relative by many members of that static and much inter-married community.

Such proximity, together with the very number of the priesthood in any parish made for a familiarity with the personnel of the Church just as confession, fasting, observance of Saints' and other special days, quite apart from the daily Mass, made for close acquaintance with its practice.

It is convenient to use the past tense in the foregoing only because the picture sketched has been modified in recent decades. It is however still the essential basis of communal life, especially in the rural community which, as suggested, holds to traditional custom longer than does the town. The modifications which have appeared are important in this present consideration because they lie behind the current social upheaval in which the individual countryman is being faced with a clash of new against old. If, as seems possible, he leaps to the new so completely as to relinquish the old entirely, then the traditional order of society will disappear along with the agricultural system on which it is based. This is the problem of the farmer in Maltese rural society.

An early non-religious movement was that of the Band Clubs; the first appeared in Rabat in 1860. But even these came to be identified with particular Churches and also with parish rivalries. The Band Club grew to become a major feature of social life in both town and country in Malta, although in Gozo it has had only a limited extension outside Victoria.

The Band Club is essentially a male organisation. Women have never been more than tolerated spectators and, to this extent, the movement reflects the place of women in Maltese society. Emancipation of women has spread into the countryside from the towns but even today women take an undemonstrative part in village activity and their movement outside the home is largely confined to Church-going, shopping and possibly field-work. The modern young woman who has had at least eight years schooling seeks paid employment beyond the house and fields. In rural circles the tendency is still to frown mightily at such a suggestion but it can only be a matter of a few years before what is now accepted in Valletta becomes tolerated in rural Gozo.

Functional diversification has been the keynote of twentieth century village society in the Maltese Islands. There is no evidence to show that there is any challenge to the position of the Parish Priest in matters religious (the situation has been less satisfactory from the point of view of the Church in urban Malta)

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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rulers who sought to control her strategic position and fine natural harbours. Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Greeks and Romans successively occupied the islands. Although it is generally held that Malta and Gozo formed part of the Byzantine Empire, virtually nothing is known of this period of Maltese history. In A.D. 870 the Arabs occupied the islands. Two hundred years later they were replaced by the Normans under Count Roger. After the death of the last Norman king, Malta shared the fate of Sicily and passed successively to the Swabians (1194–1266), the Angevins (1266–1283), the Aragonese (1283–1410), and the Castilians. In 1530, Emperor Charles V handed over Malta and Gozo with their protesting inhabitants as a fief in perpetuity to the Sovereign Military Order of St. John of Jerusalem, a powerful body of celibate nobles vowed to helping the poor, caring for the sick and waging war on Islam. Napoleon drove out the Knights in 1798, and in 1800 Britain replaced the French. The islands were formally ceded to Britain under the terms of the Treaty of Paris in 1814. Since then they have remained a British possession.

The most important recorded event in Malta's early history was the shipwreck of St. Paul in A.D. 60.[1] During the three months he stayed in Malta, he is popularly believed to have converted the people to Christianity. Whether he converted many is a moot point, but it is a fact that he baptized the Roman governor, Publius, who became Malta's first Bishop. The Maltese are intensely proud of the apostolic origin of their religion. *Missierna San Pawl*, 'Our Father St. Paul', as he is usually called, is the principal patron saint of the islands, and the feast of his shipwreck is a national celebration. Not surprisingly, there are many local legends about him. One holds that the first people to heed his gospel were the villagers of Naxxar, and that his preaching there was heard by the people of Xewkija in Gozo.

The line of bishops established with Publius was broken during the long period of Moslem rule. Count Roger, however, re-established and endowed an episcopal see. He also helped to arrange other details of ecclesiastical organization which had lapsed while Malta was under Arab domination. The present line of Maltese bishops dates from this period.

Malta had a considerable measure of local autonomy during the Aragonese and Castilian periods. Public affairs were administered

[1] Acts 27 and 28.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

647 many countries are carried out by village or municipal authorities,
[364] are in Malta centrally administered from Valletta.

Gozo provides in some respects an exception to this picture. Though Gozo is administratively and economically dependent upon Malta, it has had for many years a certain measure of autonomy under a separate Commissioner. This appointment is dictated by the island's distance from Valletta in time and space. This isolation has not surprisingly resulted in a widely held belief that the Maltese administration, in which, incidentally, a large number of Gozitans have always held important posts, has systematically
[653] neglected Gozo. That there is a certain justification for this belief can be seen by anyone who compares the condition of the roads and the extension of street lighting, water and drainage in the two islands.

623 Partly to still for ever complaints about neglect, and partly as an experiment with a concept of local government new to Malta,
653 the Gozo Civic Council was established in the summer of 1961. Each village in Gozo now has an elected committee of six councillors, one of whom represents the village on the Civic Council. The Council has the responsibility for the maintenance of roads, government buildings, cemeteries and public gardens, village dispensaries and the museum and public library. It can also construct new roads and extend drainage, water and street lighting. To
[651] finance its work the Council receives the revenue from local taxes and from certain government property in Gozo. It also has the power to levy rates, but as all councillors made solemn promises to their constituents that they would not do so, this additional source of revenue must be discounted for the time being.

II

● 793 The Maltese Islands form a single province of the Catholic
795 Church. This province is divided into the Archdiocese of Malta and the Diocese of Gozo, which includes the small island of Comino. The Bishop of Gozo is suffragan to the Archbishop of Malta. As the senior or Metropolitan Bishop, the Archbishop has
[293] certain privileges and rights over his suffragan. These include the right to visit his suffragan's diocese (with Papal authority), should the latter neglect to do so; the right to appoint a temporary vicar on the decease of the Bishop of Gozo, if the Cathedral Chapter of

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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the latter's diocese fails to appoint one within eight days; and the right to wear the insignia of his office which mark his superior dignity (the *pallium* and the double cross), throughout his province. Moreover, the Archbishop's court functions as a court of appeal for cases heard in the court of the Bishop of Gozo. In all other matters, however, the Bishop of Gozo has the same rights as the Archbishop. These include the right to make certain rules and dispensations for his diocese, to inflict penalties, interdictions and excommunication; and to determine who may be admitted to the priesthood.[1]

Each Bishop is assisted by a number of advisers, who also run the Curia, or administrative headquarters of the diocese. In the Archdiocese of Malta the Curia is under the charge of the Vicar General, who has the title of Titular Bishop. These advisers are for the most part Monsignori, or Canons, of the Cathedral Chapter. The Cathedral Chapter is composed of the priests attached to a cathedral church who advise the Bishop, arrange for a more solemn celebration of divine worship, and, when the See is vacant, provide for the government of the diocese. Though the Archdiocese of Malta has both a Cathedral in Mdina, and a Co-Cathedral in Valletta, there is only one Chapter.

In addition to the Cathedral Chapters in Malta and Gozo, there are also a number of Collegiate churches. The clergy of a Collegiate Church form a Collegiate Chapter, and have the title of Canons. They perform no special duties in the diocese. The title of 'Collegiate' is an honour which can only be bestowed upon a church with Papal sanction. There are Collegiate Chapters in Senglea, Vittoriosa, Cospicua, Rabat, Birkirkara and Valletta in Malta, and in Gharb, Nadur and Xaghra in Gozo.

The Archdiocese of Malta and the Diocese of Gozo are divided into 48 and 15 parishes respectively. A parish is the basic social and territorial unit of the Church. Every village in Malta and Gozo is a separate parish, though some towns are divided into two or more parishes. The limits of a parish are fixed by the Bishop. They often extend several miles beyond the compact villages that are so characteristic of the Maltese countryside. In most rural parishes there are also a few scattered farmsteads. The occupants of these isolated farms normally have houses in the village, to which they

[1] Cf. William E. Addis and others, 'Archbishop', *A Catholic Dictionary* (16th ed. rev.; London, Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1960), pp. 44 f.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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621 move for religious feasts and family celebrations. Sometimes a
794 number of these farms are clustered around a chapel or small
795 church dependent upon the parish church. In time, these hamlets may disappear; historical sources cite many which have long since vanished.[1] On the other hand, a hamlet may grow to the point where its inhabitants can afford to build a larger church and in other ways successfully press their claim to become a separate parish. Most rural parishes in Malta and Gozo have come into
632 being in this way. Some towns have been divided into two or
794 more parishes for administrative reasons. In Malta, Qormi and
795 Valletta are each divided into two parishes, and Sliema into three.
[578] Rabat in Gozo is currently being divided into two parishes. But because of fierce rivalry between the residents of the territories concerned, the exact boundary line is disputed and the territorial division will probably take another generation to complete.

79 The parish priest, who in all but the smallest parishes is assisted by a curate or more, is responsible to the Church for the care of
[609] the souls of all Catholics resident in his parish. Except where foreign service personnel live with their families – notably in Rabat, Naxxar, Mosta, St. Paul's Bay, Luqa and Birżebbuġa – all villagers are Catholic, and are thus the priest's parishioners. These parishioners also form part of the corporate body of the Church.

793 The clergy in Malta, as in all other Catholic countries, are divided into two main groups: the secular or diocesan clergy, and the regular clergy. Diocesan priests are trained in the Bishop's Seminary and are directly subject to the authority of the Bishop. A further distinction is made between those diocesan priests whose families or patrons have been able to provide them with a benefice – either property or cash deposited at the Curia bank – yielding a minimum of £10 annually, and those who have received their benefices from their Bishop. After the first five years the former, who are by far the most numerous, are free to serve where they wish. The latter always remain at the service of their Bishop. Most parishes are run by diocesan priests, and the clergy
[792] resident in the villages belong to this group. The friars and monks of the regular clergy are members of religious orders. They have been trained in the seminaries and houses of their particular orders.

[1] An interesting study of villages which have disappeared is given in M. Richardson, *Aspects of the Demography of Modern Malta* (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Durham, 1960), pp. 243 ff.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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They must live together in specially designated premises under the discipline of their order, and they are subject to the authority of their provincial or superior. As we shall see, the position that the clergy occupy in society and the nature of their work is to a very considerable extent determined by their sheer numbers. In 1957 there were 1,229 diocesan priests, friars and monks and 1,588 nuns in Malta and Gozo.[1] In addition to these, in 1958 there were approximately 220 friars and monks and 200 nuns studying abroad or working as missionaries or chaplains to communities of migrants.[2]

There are a number of associations which occupy important positions in the structure of both the diocese and its constituent parishes. At the diocesan level the most important of these are the College of Archpriests and Parish Priests, which acts as a pressure group in the interest of its members; the Cana Movement, which runs courses for engaged couples, a marriage advisory council and a clinic; and the Social Action Movement, which is trying to establish trade unions. There is also the Diocesan Junta, or Diocesan Council of Catholic Lay Organizations. This body, on which most of the diocesan and parochial societies are represented, is an important pressure group. As already noted, it played a leading part in bringing about the defeat of the Malta Labour Party in the 1962 elections.

Many associations, though organized at the diocesan level, have semi-autonomous branches at the parish level. These can be roughly divided into the lay apostolate associations and the devotional societies. The lay apostolate groups have been organized so that 'the Church will be able to exercise its direct and indirect action in all the fields: religious, cultural, technical, family, workers' movements and others.'[3] These societies are usually divided by age and sex, and except for the Society of Christian Doctrine, all are run by village priests who are responsible to the parish priest. These chaplains and the lay leaders generally work out an active programme of lectures, good works and outings. Many of them take part in religious processions and, in general, support the work of the parish priest. Together with the clergy,

[1] *1957 Census of the Maltese Islands: Report on Economic Activities* (Valletta, Central Office of Statistics, 1958), p. 45.
[2] Charles G. Vella, ed., *The Catholic Directory of Malta and Gozo* (Valletta, Archbishop's Palace, 1958), pp. 273–308.
[3] François H. Houtart, *in* Vella, p. 311.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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hair short, are not allowed to wear neckties, and must wear jackets in public. Female members are obliged to wear the traditional Maltese *ghonella* (also *faldetta*). This is a black silk cowl which renders the wearer completely shapeless. Finally, all members are tied by a promise of celibacy. Since members usually enter the society as children, and work up through grades until they become full members, this promise ensures that all are either bachelors or spinsters.

The male and female sections are completely separate. Each meets daily under its respective superior in its own house. There the members hold devotional exercises, conduct study groups for adults and also teach catechism to the children. The superiors are normally elected for life; but if the members cannot agree, the national superior general, after consultation with the parish priest, appoints an acting superior, either from the village or from outside groups.

The society is somewhat unusual among village religious associations, since no member of the village clergy is directly involved in its activities, though priests are often invited in to give lectures. This relatively independent status, and the close contact that members maintain with their national headquarters, has led some parish priests to look upon it as a potential threat to their authority and consequently to oppose its establishment in their parishes. Thus, although the society has spread to 40 (83 per cent) of the Maltese parishes, it is only established in 6 (40 per cent) of those in Gozo, Malta's conservative sister island. In point of fact, wherever it has been established it has supported the authority of the parish priest, and its members are now among the staunchest opponents of the Labour Party.

In each parish there are usually several loosely organized groups such as the Association of Christian Mothers and the Holy Name Society which meet infrequently for special prayers and devotions.

Finally, there is at least one confraternity in each parish. A confraternity is a lay religious society which is dedicated to a particular saint and offers Masses for dead members. These societies, called *fratellanzi*, are the oldest associations in Malta, and many date back to the Middle Ages. Formerly certain confraternities in the larger villages and towns acted as trade guilds; others only enrolled persons of the highest socio-economic class. Both men and women may enrol, as members; but only men may wear the

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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CHAPTER IV

The Basis of Leadership

The Maltese word for leader, *mexxej*, is seldom heard, and then only in reference to the leader of a political party. I once asked a parish priest who were the leaders of the village. He laughed and replied that there weren't any, because his parishioners did not like leaders. With the exception of the professionals and *il-puliti* from the towns, all the inhabitants of a village usually call one another by their Christian names and in general look upon each other as equals. This egalitarian outlook is compounded of many factors, of which the most important are similar occupation, standard of living and values, the detailed knowledge of each other's personal lives that comes with residence in a face-to-face community, and jealousy. Any person who attempts to lead or to try to start something new – such as a village playground – is derided. His true motive is seen as self aggrandizement and his enemies and envious neighbours are quick to point this out to others who may not have realized it. 'Envy follows the wise man like his shadow' (*L-ghira titrot wara l-gharef bhal dellu mieghu*), goes the Maltese proverb. Professionals and outsiders, especially if they are from the town, are occasionally able to start something new. Their social distance from most of the community protects them from the full impact of the envy and gossip which moulds so much of village life.

But in spite of the absence of official lay leaders and the conservative pressure of envy and gossip, there are a number of persons who have a greater say than others in the affairs of the community. They are able to do this by virtue of their social position, their occupation or office in one of the village associations or their influence with the parish priest. These persons, together with the parish priest, form the aggregate which can be said to run the affairs of the community. While there is no generic term for this aggregate, those who compose it are sometimes referred to as *il-kbarat*, 'the big ones', or more derogatively as

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

in-ejjus il-kbar, 'the big heads'. But if asked, a person will often deny that such persons exist, and reply, 'Here we are all the same; we are all from the village'.

II

The authority of the State is represented by the police, who are formally responsible for law and order. Each village has a police station manned by a small contingent of constables under a sergeant. Several villages make up a police district under an inspector. In Malta most policemen live outside the villages in which they work. But it is usual for Gozitan constables stationed in Malta to be quartered in the police stations to which they are assigned.

In addition to their official duties of law enforcement, the police distribute voting certificates, help conduct censuses and give out the allotments of free food to old age pensioners and people on relief.[1] They also perform many favours for local residents. They help people fill out government forms, and occasionally allow the station telephone to be used for private calls. They are sometimes able to mediate in local disputes. Disputants very often report each other for insults, threats or some minor infraction of the law – throwing waste water and rubbish in the street is one of the most common – thus hoping to strangle their enemies in its due process. The police constable on duty is often able to reconcile the disputants and persuade them to withdraw the charges and counter-charges.

In general, the punitive role that the police are occasionally forced to play is offset by their role as distributors of government assistance and by their general helpfulness. District inspectors try to avoid personal relations with the people in their districts since they must prosecute all criminal cases, and personal ties might prove awkward. Sergeants and constables, on the other hand, normally maintain friendly social contact with the local inhabitants. They are often invited for drinks during feasts and weddings, and quite a number marry local girls. The Maltese police thus play

[1] The government has distributed surplus U.S. agricultural products to different groups of needy people since 1956. This food was first secured through the Co-operative for American Relief to Everywhere, Inc. (C.A.R.E., Inc.) and more recently through the Catholic Relief Services of America. The Department of Emigration, Labour and Social Welfare, not the police, selects the beneficiaries.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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a very different role from that of their Spanish counterparts, the Civil Guard, whom Kenny describes as 'the traditional enemy of the peasants'.[1]

III

The very considerable authority of the Church in Malta is derived not from law, but from the loyalty of a people who fervently practise their religion. Until recently, there had never been a separation in their minds between Church and State, between the religious and secular elements in their daily lives. The Church, as we have already observed, has occupied this position for many centuries. Its power is bolstered by its considerable wealth, for in Malta the rich property and lands of the Church have not been expropriated by the State, as they have in so many other Catholic countries.[2]

As the official representative of the Church, the parish priest occupies a position of great importance in his community. He has authority in all religious matters affecting his parishioners. He ministers to their spiritual and often to their personal needs. He alone can arrange for the important ceremonies which mark the stages in their lives. These *rites de passage* include baptism, confirmation, marriage, death and burial. He also controls the many ritual activities of the village as a whole. These are the daily services of worship and the ceremonies, processions and feasts by which all Maltese, but above all the countrymen, regulate their days and mark the divisions of the year. Through his preaching and admonition he defines, interprets and enforces the moral code of the Church. He is also the official custodian of the richly decorated parish church.

Besides this dependence on the parish priest in the religious matters which are of such vital importance in the lives of a devoutly Catholic people, the country people have traditionally looked to him for assistance in many secular fields. Until only a few decades ago, he was often one of the few literate persons in his parish. As such he was frequently asked to read and write letters.

[1] Op. cit., p. 48.

[2] Mitchell estimates that the Church owns 22 per cent of the agricultural land in Malta and 12 per cent in Gozo. See Peter K. Mitchell, *The Maltese Farm*, vol. II of *Studies in the Agrarian Geography of Malta* (mimeographed; Dept. of Geography, Durham Colleges in the University of Durham, 1959), p. 130.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

letters. His high standing in the village, and his contacts with people of influence and power outside it, led people to turn to him for advice. He was asked to represent them in their relations with the outside world. In this capacity he served his parishioners as lawyer, banker and business adviser. He was also the traditional dispenser of charity.

The increasing literacy of the people and their ever-widening range of contacts outside the limits of the parish has somewhat reduced their dependence upon the parish priest. The State's recent involvement in welfare and charity has further weakened it. But if this dependence has been reduced, it has most certainly not been eliminated. Many still call on him to divide inheritances, to argue their claims against the government or to plead with prospective employers, and not a few expect him to be able to secure better roads, new schools, sewerage and playgrounds.

Thus the parish priest is the village's chief spokesman, and many still refer to him as *il-principal tar-rahal*, 'the head of the village'. The government has long recognized this, and makes use of him as a convenient contact with the people. Each Sunday morning, in addition to his own official announcements, the parish priest reads from the altar government notices advising the people of forthcoming elections, immunization campaigns, agricultural extension lectures and so on.

But if the parish priest performs numerous services for his parishioners, both individually and collectively, he has also the power to refuse them. The sanctions with which he can punish disobedience are considerable. They range from declining to write a good conduct certificate to denying absolution in confession. On the other hand, he has the power to give rewards for services rendered. Aside from doing favours for people who have helped him, he can appoint them to offices which confer prestige and authority and, in some cases, are also financially rewarding. All this serves to underline and reinforce his position as a leader in the community.

Parish priests are usually outsiders, but the rest of the village clergy are natives of the communities in which they live. Unlike Catholic priests in Britain or the United States, who live in presbyteries, the diocesan clergy of Malta and Gozo live at home with their relatives. This means that they remain in constant contact with the village. They are often called on to take part in family

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

793 quarrels and village disputes, for their position in society makes them important allies. These demands frequently place them in the difficult position of having to choose between acting as an impartial servant of God and acting as a good son and loyal friend, who can only be impartial at the cost of making enemies of friends and family.

793 While parish priests, in all save the smallest parishes, usually
465 receive an income sufficient for a reasonably comfortable life, few ordinary diocesan priests can live on their income as clerics. The average village priest gets only his daily Mass stipend of five shillings as compensation for his clerical services. If a priest is popular and gifted, he may be able to earn a bit extra by preaching, lecturing and taking part in religious functions in other parishes. Even so, most priests are forced to look to secular fields to be able to help support their parents and near relatives. Thus it is that most of the village clergy are part-time priests. That is, they spend most of the day away from their parish working at jobs that vary from farming to school teaching. Their pastoral work in their own parish is limited.

793 Of the eight priests born in Kortin and still living there, two are retired, one is the parish curate, two work outside the village as teachers and three are clerks with various diocesan bodies. In the evening most help the parish priest in church, teach catechism to the children and take charge of the various lay associations for which the parish priest has asked them to be responsible. In Farrug there is only one local priest in the village. He teaches in the village's elementary school, and assists the parish priest in the evening, on Sundays and on feast days.

794 In almost every village there is an infants' school run by one of the
[792] female religious orders. The nuns are supported by donations of cash and produce from the local inhabitants. A few nuns earn something
[465] by doing elementary nursing among the sick of the community.
[872] There are a number of other officers connected with the parish. These include the procurators (administrators) of the smaller churches and chapels, the sacristan, the choirmaster, the organist, the prefect of the altar boys, and so on. All have certain responsi-
[793] bilities delegated to them by the parish priest. In those villages where the celebration of the annual festa is organized by a committee, its members have the authority to command the financial and manpower resources of the community while they prepare

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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Most of the procuratorships and offices in the associations connected with the Church are conferred upon members of the circle of persons who figuratively, and often physically, surround the parish priest. They become his favourites by doing some of the hundred and one odd jobs for which he depends on volunteers. These include running messages, carrying chairs, arranging meetings and decorating the streets for feasts and other important occasions, such as the visit of the Archbishop. Acceptance into the circle and the rewards meted out vary, of course, according to the capabilities of the individuals concerned, and the character of the parish priest. Advancement is most rapid and the rewards most interesting where the parish priest is open to influence, and the job-seeker has the qualities of leadership discussed below. But people are loath to see their parish priest delegate too much of his authority to their fellows. Those who pursue power in the community by attaching themselves to the parish priest often incur a good measure of hostility. Most frequently they are accused by the village gossips of lining their pockets with their neighbour's money.

The most important member of the circle surrounding the parish priest in Kortin is old Manwel, a retired school teacher. As procurator of the Confraternity of our Lady of Sorrows, he collects funds for and organizes the elaborate Good Friday procession. This is an event which attracts visitors from all over the island. He is also procurator of the Confraternity of St. Joseph, the village cemetery and the Mass legacies of the parish. He is one of the founders and a former vice-president and secretary of the Social Club, and a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Though no longer in the Band Club, he was once on its committee. For many years he was also on the committee which organized the annual festa. All these offices give him a greater voice in the administration of the parish and its ceremonial affairs than anyone except the parish priest.

IV

The officers of the secular associations in a village generally enjoy high standing and wield considerable influence. The secular associations, though they vary, generally include a men's social club (usually a brass band club), a political party committee or

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of government. While the parish priest in Malta is the official village representative of the Church and has authority to act for it on most matters, the police represent only the law enforcement function of government; all other functions and services of government are administered from Valletta. In this respect the villages of Malta are unique.

On the other hand, there is a relation between social status and the functional requirements of the authority system. In any given community, the people with the highest status usually fill the most important offices, since such offices require the standing, skills and contacts which they possess. There is thus a rough grading of office holders in terms of their social status and the authority and prestige attached to their offices. Upward mobility through this structure is usually dependent upon factors such as education and occupation rather than on having held other, and less important, offices. Once a person has become the president of his local band club, in other words has attained the highest secular office in the village, and has a social status which commands respect outside, he may be elected to political office.

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796 competing for the attention of the crowd within a few yards of
533 each other.

All the while, the procession, followed by a few black-clad
292 penitents, solemnly passes through the main streets of the village.
481 Often those carrying the saint move with a shuffling step that causes him to bob and turn as though he were dancing. As he passes under balconies his cheering and clapping admirers shower him with confetti. Then, as the procession nears the church, the final *kaxxa infernal*, this time of coloured rockets, is touched off. In some villages the saint is turned around so that he can see this barrage and the display of multi-staged rockets that follows it. The statue then enters the church and the Benediction is given. After this the crowd of visitors quickly disperses. Soon the inhabitants have the village to themselves again. As the women and girls wheel and pull the children off to bed, the men carry around from club to club the grimy, soot-stained men who made and fired the fireworks. They are the heroes of the hour. Other men seek out their clubs or usual cafés and toast one another and the success of their feast. So ends the festa for another year.

796 The organization of the annual festa requires a long period of
793 planning and preparation. This work calls for a certain degree of
794 centralization. In most villages the parish priest controls the organization of both the internal and the external feasts. In some villages, however, he delegates some of this work to a procurator, usually a priest, but occasionally to a committee of leading per-
575 sonalities of the village. In other villages, all the details of the external feast, including the fund raising, are handled by the band club committees. In any case, the parish priest always has the last word. Sometimes there is friction between him and other interested parties over organizational details.

796 The cost of these feasts varies considerably. It is naturally
794 related to the size of the village and to the degree of enthusiasm
435 with which the festa is celebrated. It ranges from a few shillings per family in a large urban parish to as much as £15 per family in a small rural parish celebrating a particularly important festa. The average cost to the community, however, is about £1,000. The organizers of the festa collect the necessary funds by means of lotteries, fairs, special appeals and a small weekly contribution of threepence or sixpence from each family. Most fund raisers also solicit pledges from leading citizens and enter their names and the

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sums pledged on a long list. This method, called *l-arbural*, permits donors to compare their contributions with those of others. Then there may be several unofficial groups who raise funds for fireworks, which they manufacture and fire as their special contributions to the feast.

While I was living in Farrug, the village celebrated the centenary of St. Martin, the titular saint of the parish. The festa cost a total of £1,463. Of this sum the parish priest raised and spent £302 for the elaborate internal feast, of which he took complete charge. The rest, some £1,163, was collected and spent on the external feast by the committee of the St. Martin Band Club. The fireworks, including most of the gunpowder, were made illegally by the members of the club in their houses and in sheds and abandoned quarries surrounding the village. The cost of the raw materials amounted to £712. Committee members divided the actual work among themselves, and set up sub-committees dealing with decoration, music, fireworks and fund-raising. With the exception of the extra lighting for the streets and the church, which was done by an outside contractor, all the work involved in the festa was done by local inhabitants.

In Kortin, on the other hand, the parish priest personally controls every aspect of the festa. With the assistance of the Sodality of Our Lady, he collects all the funds. Most of the street decoration is done by Anton and Pawlu, who get a number of people to help them. In the following table, I have summarized the rather complicated accounts of the 1961 festa in Kortin.

TABLE 3. Kortin 1961 Festa Accounts

INCOME	£ s.	EXPENSES	£ s.
Internal Feast		*Internal Feast*	
Collections	143 10	Music	150 0
Special gifts	121 10	Other	50 0
External Feast		*External Feast*	
Three collections	221 10	Decorations, programmes, etc.	39 14
Weekly 3d.	120 0	Fireworks: crackers and ground display only	105 16
Lotteries	90 0	Bands: 8 performances	224 10
'Arbural'	53 0	Lighting	170 0
		Balance	9 10
Total	£749 10	*Total*	£749 10

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each association, including the religious ones.[1] The committee forwarded the names of the representatives of its three constituent clubs to Dun Bert. After some time, when they had received no reply from him, they wrote to the Archbishop. Finally, some two months later, Dun Bert wrote back that he could not accept any member of a political party committee on the parish council. This was clearly aimed at the secretary of the band club, who was a very active member of the Labour Party committee, the only political committee in the village. He was not willing to step down, and the other members of the committee supported his decision. The rest of the village slowly lost interest in the matter. The parish priest thus had his way, and is still in full control of the feast.

Many are still bitter about the manner in which their request to take a more active part in the organization of their feast was suppressed, but most have accepted it. They miss not so much the old festa committee, the members of which most people criticized freely, as the feeling they had had of all working together for the greater glory of the village. The members of the old committee at least had the virtue of being from the village, and were as anxious as the next person to celebrate the biggest and best feast in Malta, or so I was often told. Although no one suggested that the parish priest is anything but scrupulously honest, they consider that as an outsider, he does not have the same keen interest in their feast, and in the reputation of the village. Others, less charitable, accuse him of being hungry for power and anxious to enrich himself with his fees as procurator of the festa. Many also spoke to me with regret of the passing of the annual fairs, which the parish priest has not attempted to run on his own. The fairs were exciting occasions on which young and old, rich and poor, competed against each other in games of chance and raffles to win back the rabbits and chickens which they had previously donated to the festa. They say they miss the sense of unity that the fairs brought them. 'In those days we knew each other better,' one priest remarked. 'With the fair some of the poetry of the village was destroyed.' Perhaps, without expressing it in quite this fashion, the organizers of the committee, in their own way, were also seeking this lost poetry.

[1] Such parish councils have from time to time been established in some of the larger villages and towns, but most of them came to threaten the authority of the parish priests, who therefore disbanded them.

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IV

Even when a parish is not competing with another for some honour, the decoration of the parish church is a matter of great concern to the village. As we have already observed, a parish church is more than just a central place of worship; it is the centre of most of the social life of a village and the repository of its collective wealth. The building itself, with its gilded ceilings and silver altar fronts, its damask tapestries and embroidered vestments, its precious votive offerings and ornate statues, represents a fortune amassed over centuries from the savings and bequests of countless inhabitants. The parish church is thus the embodiment of village history, a showpiece which all, even the most anti-clerical Labour supporters, point out with great pride to strangers.

The custodian of the church is the parish priest, who is responsible for all alterations or improvements to it. He often delegates much of this work, especially the fund-raising, to a local priest, who then becomes procurator of the church. Many church procurators devote their lives to building and beautifying their churches, and every generation contributes thousands of pounds for its upkeep and embellishment. But regardless of who holds the procura of the church, the people regard it as their communal property, and all take an intense interest in its maintenance and decoration. Because of this proprietary interest, a difference of opinion over details of decoration, and especially over structural alterations to it, can divide a village into strongly opposed factions.

At the beginning of this century Kortin was divided on the question whether to enlarge the existing church or to build a new one. The stronger faction, which included the resident nobles and the wealthy merchants, wished to build a new church. Their leader was Sur Vincenz, the grandfather of Sur Gorg. A wealthy merchant was thought to be willing to help finance the scheme. This group was opposed by most of the village clergy, including the parish priest, on the ground that the cost of a new church was beyond the resources of the village. Moreover, a benefactor had already bequeathed £2,000 for enlarging the church. The leader of this faction was Dun Batist, the senior local priest in the village.

The dispute raged from about 1880, when the plans of the new church were drawn up, to about 1913. In 1898 a number of people

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addressed a petition to the Archbishop requesting permission to build a new church. But a year and a half later he ruled in favour of a counter-petition, and gave permission to begin reconstructing the old church. Shortly after this a riot developed out of a meeting called to urge the parish priest to permit the building of a new church. During the commotion, the stone railing around the front of the church was damaged. Six days afterward forty-two people were arrested for disturbing the peace and taken off to prison. After three days the arrested men were released because of insufficient evidence. The court assessed the total damage to the church railing at twenty-two shillings. This incident aroused the village. A month later the new church faction decided to begin work without the permission of the Archbishop. Early the following Sunday, a huge crowd led by Sur Vinċenz asked the parish priest for permission to work on Sunday. When their request was refused, they set off for the site and began to work anyway. That afternoon, Sur Vinċenz hired a band to play for them, and the music attracted people from many surrounding villages. The following day Dun Batist and the parish priest laid the matter before the Archbishop.

All through the month of October 1901 the leaders of the new church faction went in delegations to argue their case before the Archbishop, who was on holiday in Marsalforn, Gozo. The local diarist, on whose account much of the above is based, notes cynically that the Bishop listened with great attention, as he was in debt to one of the leading members. Meanwhile, the parish priest had been able to mediate between the factions. Dun Batist and his followers agreed to stop their work on the old church provided their opponents reimbursed them for their expenses to date. This was arranged. Finally, in January 1902 the parish priest announced that the Archbishop had given his permission for the construction of the new church. That afternoon there was a great celebration in the village, with many fireworks and a guest band, again paid for by Sur Gorg's grandfather.

But the construction of the new church soon ran into trouble. Sur Vinċenz failed to raise the capital required. As Dun Batist had foreseen, the cost of this grandiose scheme was far more than the village could manage. After the foundations had been laid, the work gradually came to a halt. The village did not begin to rebuild the old church until the end of 1909, when the parish priest set out to raise the extra £2,000 required.

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346 794 [815] set out to raise the extra £2,000 required. One of the fund-raisers at the time was young Manwel, the father of Dr. Farrugia, who had then just begun to teach in the village school. The reconstruction of the old church was finally completed in 1913.

794 578 Sur Vincenz gradually dropped out of village activities. Many people blamed him for the trouble in the community. In 1912 he refused to allow the organizers of the festa to anchor one of the major street decorations in its customary position against his house. This action created more hostility towards him, and shortly after the festa a bomb was thrown through his cellar window. During the next six weeks he and his close relatives received several threatening letters, and one night the front of his house was smeared with red paint. But the rivalry between the factions gradually died out, and today there is no trace of it left. The old [887] men of Kortin who now spend their days in the shade of the huge façade of the church, and their evenings on its cool steps, remember the struggle clearly, for they were all deeply involved in it. As they look back to the events of sixty years ago, they often remark with wry smiles that the village was then a very lively place.

346 578 794 This incident was exceptional because of the immense cost to the village in money and labour that the construction of the new church involved. Now that church-building is no longer in vogue, new works usually take the form of decorations, such as new paintings or candlesticks. These do not generally arouse strong feelings, since all additions to the beauty and wealth of the church are normally welcome. A wise priest, however, tries to ensure that there is general agreement about them. It sometimes happens that he forgets, or underestimates, the proprietary interest of his parishioners in their church. When this occurs, there is usually trouble.

346 578 793 794 Some years ago, the parish priest of Farrug proposed to regild the chancel. His parishioners welcomed the idea, and contributed generously. But when the work was finally completed and the scaffolding removed, his parishioners were shocked to find that he had placed his personal coat of arms high over the chancel. He was the first priest in the history of the parish to have put his coat of arms inside their church; moreover, he had done so without their consent. There was great indignation, but the arms remained there. A year later he was promoted to a larger parish, and left

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the village. People then began to ask the new parish priest to have the coat of arms removed. He quite understandably declined to do so.

One morning, less than two months after the old priest had left, the village was startled by the news that the irksome coat of arms had been removed in the dead of night by persons unknown. In its place gleamed the freshly painted arms of the village. The job, which had involved at least three men, one of whom must have worked on top of a 60-foot ladder, had been skilfully executed. To add insult to injury, the nocturnal painters had telephoned the former parish priest after finishing their work and announced that he would find something of great interest in the church next time he visited Farrug. The following morning he came to the village, saw what had happened to his coat of arms, and immediately reported the matter to the police. The police interviewed many people, but did not find the culprits. They are still looking for them. The village is quite pleased that the arms were removed, although some deplored the rather crude way in which it had been done.

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578 621 79 Confraternity of St. Roque. Unfortunately, at this point, it is not possible to distinguish fact from myth. The tales are accepted as reality, and so help to formulate the attitude of St. Martin supporters toward their rivals. However, when the old priest died, it was discovered that most of the festal finery of the parish church had been purchased in the name of the Confraternity of St. Roque. St. Martin supporters were in the humiliating position of having to beg their rivals for the use of the church valuables in order to decorate the church for the feast of the parish patron. Moreover, while the old priest had controlled the celebration of St. Martin, he had allowed the lay leaders of the St. Roque partit a free hand in planning their feast.

578 621 665 At this time the St. Martin club was split over national politics, and a faction composed of Strickland supporters left and founded a new club. Though both clubs remained loyal to St. Martin, there was trouble between them. Older St. Roque partisans recount with amusement how a report to the police by the secretary of the parent club resulted in twenty members of the new club being arrested and fined for gambling. But the hostility between these two factions declined when Strickland made his peace with the Church, and in 1934 they reunited.

578 621 713 714 The burden of redressing the balance between the partiti fell upon the old priest's successor, and upon those who followed him. There were many incidents between these priests and the St. Roque partit, and on several occasions the former had to send for police protection. In spite of the 1935 regulations, the St. Roque partit retained its numerical superiority as well as the church decorations during the 'thirties. It was not until 1942 that a shrewd parish priest succeeded in bringing the silver altar front out of the St. Roque strongroom into that of the parish church, where it has remained ever since.

The rivalry between the partiti lay dormant during the Second World War, as the people united to fight for survival. But it flared up again immediately after the war, as did similar rivalry in other villages. Both clubs organized musical bands for the first time. After a series of incidents which culminated in the parish priest again having to send for police protection, this time against angry St. Martin supporters, the rivalry began to decline somewhat. This decline was brought about chiefly by the effects of emigration, improvements in local transport, the establishment of a number

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of new associations in the village and the increased activity of political parties.

During the mid-'fifties emigration drained away many of the most active supporters of the partiti. In 1954 alone, no fewer than two dozen men between 18 and 38 left the village for Australia and Canada. Each club lost key bandsmen, and the two bands, already heavily bolstered with outside players, never recovered. A constantly improving bus service enabled young men to go to the 'talkies' in other villages, or just stroll up and down Kingsway in Valletta – a very popular pastime with young people from all over Malta – instead of spending the evening in their village clubs. During this period the Football Club, MUSEUM and Catholic Action were established in the village and began to draw potential partit leaders into other spheres of activity. The Football Club was particularly damaging in this respect. As a neutral social club it provided a place where the young men of the two partiti, who normally never entered one another's clubs, could meet. A number of friendships developed between them, and it soon became the most popular club in the village. Finally, the increased activity of the national political parties during the elections in 1950, 1951, 1953 and 1955 drew the attention of the villagers away from purely parochial concerns and bound them up in rivalries of a different order, which often cut across traditional allegiances. This created factions within the clubs and weakened the partiti.

Rivalry flared up again in 1960, when the supporters of St. Martin, intent upon celebrating the centenary of their patron, staged the greatest festa in the history of the village. But the political and religious fervour of the 1961 election campaign soon captured the attention of the partisans, and the festa of the following year was a pale shadow of the gala spectacle of the year before.

Before proceeding any further, we must unravel the rather complicated tangle of partit, club and confraternity. All festa partiti are composed of three groups: (i) the band club, which provides the leadership of the partit and includes most of the active male supporters, many of whom are also members of (ii) the confraternity allied with the partit or dedicated to its patron, and (iii) the rank and file of men, women and children who are members neither of the confraternity nor of the club, but still support the partit against its rival. The central strand running through all

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fewer professional class members. Consequently competition for the role of leader does not occur so often, and there is a longer tenure of office. In the partit of a titular saint, with its better-educated members, there are more men with the necessary qualities of leadership, and accordingly more competition for office and a high turnover of office holders. The competition both creates and results from internal factions which weaken the group. In Farrug, for example, the President of the St. Roque Band Club has led the St. Roque partit more or less continuously since Dun Rokku died thirty years ago. He is also just about the only member of the partit with the educational qualifications and social position required of a leader. The key positions of the St. Martin Band Club, in contrast, constantly pass between about half a dozen educated persons. This divided leadership has weakened the club; and on one occasion it even split in two. The strong leadership and internal unity of the secondary partiti, plus the fact that they rarely present claims that are not well founded, has enabled them to score many successes in spite of their apparently unfavourable position in relation to the Church.

Disputes between festa partiti are all very much alike. A typical dispute begins when leaders of a secondary partit petition the parish priest for some new privilege, for example the right to renew the bouquets of artificial flowers which adorn the statue of their saint. The parish priest normally refuses at first, and tells them that he thinks the old flowers are quite serviceable. His policy is to let sleeping dogs lie. Moreover, he has to take into account the rule that decorations for secondary feasts must not be more beautiful than those for titular ones. But the saint's supporters continue to bring influence to bear on him. In the meantime, members of the titular partit have learned of their rivals' move and rush to the parish priest to point out that the old flowers are more than adequate. They threaten to cancel their feast if he gives in on this matter. The priest is now caught in a vice, and the pressure on him builds up. Finally, he agrees to refer the whole case to the Curia and passes the matter upwards, usually with a feeling of relief. Relations between him and the partiti return to normal, as the scene of the struggle shifts to the Curia.

The Curia normally appoints experts to re-investigate the merits of the case, including the proposed design of the flowers. Leaders from both partiti spend a great deal of their time at the

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Curia trying to persuade all concerned, from the Bishop down, to think the way they do. This may go on for years, for the Curia, knowing the trouble that lies ahead, is usually in no hurry to give its decision. When the final decision is handed down, it is usually favourable, and the design for a set of flowers less beautiful and costly than the corresponding set of the titular partit is furnished. The secondary partit then instructs the craftsmen to begin work. The titular partit announces to everyone that it will cancel its next feast.

It often happens, however, that just before the new bouquets (or whatever *objets d'art* are concerned) are inaugurated during the secondary festa, the parish priest discovers that most of the Curia's specifications have been ignored. The new flowers are far more beautiful than they were supposed to be. He is furious. The guilty leaders of the secondary partit apologize profusely and take immediate steps to make them less beautiful. Occasionally, the priest may discipline the partit by temporarily reducing the scale of its feast. The secondary partit then holds its feast, and the flowers are admired by all visitors. Strong police reinforcements usually prevent trouble from occurring. Relations between the parish priest and the titular partit are gradually re-established and it agrees, usually for some concessions on his part, to celebrate its feast again. But in a year or so, a new dispute occurs, and the process starts all over again.

Sometimes relations between a parish priest and a partit reach a deadlock that can be broken only by an outside peacemaker, frequently an officer of the police. The police in any case have a vital interest in the degree of rivalry existing in the villages, as it is their business to keep order during the feast. The number of police on duty at these times ranges from a dozen or so in villages such as Siġġiewi and Naxxar, where there are no partiti, to around 100 in those where there are strong ones, such as Mqabba and Żurrieq. Occasionally a parish priest is threatened, frightened by a home-made bomb, or attacked; he then often requests, and generally receives, a transfer to another parish.

So far only the more important encounters between partiti have been discussed. There are many other events to keep their rivalry alive throughout the year. The numerous fund-raising fairs of the band clubs are occasions for the village to divide along festa partit lines. While supporters of the partit running the fair flock

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recently petitioned the Archbishop for permission to renew the platform on which their saint stands during the feast. St. Martin supporters have threatened to cancel their feast if permission is granted, as it probably will be, for the present platform is old and falling to pieces.

While I was in the village, there was also a dispute over precedence between the two band clubs on the occasion of the installation ceremony of Dun Frangisk, the present parish priest. This is a good example of a dispute over precedence, and it is one which recurs in some form every time a new parish priest is appointed to a village where there are two band clubs. The band which has precedence has the right to march last and to escort the priest from the church to his house after the ceremony. The other club escorts him from his house to the church before the ceremony. Quite straightforward, but clubs rarely agree on which one has precedence. The dispute thus presents a knotty problem that brings a new priest abruptly up against the realities of parish politics within a few days after his arrival. His handling of the matter may well govern his relations with the partiti during the rest of his time in the village.

On the evening when Dun Frangisk moved into the parish, the St. Martin Band Club gave a party to welcome him and to bid farewell to his predecessor, who had been its strong ally. The party was a great success. The departing priest received a huge coloured portrait of St. Martin as a farewell gift, and Dun Frangisk met all the St. Martin leaders and blessed the club's new television set. A few days later, the St. Martin leaders called on the new priest and offered to provide a musical escort to and from the church for his installation ceremony. This was to be followed by a concert in the square and a firework display. The offer pleased him and he accepted. During the next few days the St. Martin club went about collecting the £25 the band programme would cost, thus advising the village of its plans.

Until then Dun Frangisk had heard nothing from the St. Roque club, a fact which rather disturbed him.

Two days later he called in person at both clubs to invite them to attend his installation ceremony and the reception following it. But he found the clubs deserted. The members of the St. Martin committee were away offering their congratulations to the old parish priest, who that night was holding his installation ceremony

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in his new parish. Most of the St. Roque leaders, for their part, were off supervising a fund-raising fair which they had hastily organized to help ensure that no St. Roque supporter would be tempted to attend the lavish reception of their former antagonist. Finding no one of importance at the clubs, Dun Frangisk left the invitations with the bar-keepers.

Two days later a group of St. Roque leaders called to thank him for his invitation, at the same time informing him that they were looking forward to escorting him to and from the church with their band. Dun Frangisk had been warned by his predecessor that this might happen, so he asked them to meet him the next evening to discuss the details of the programme with the other club.

Next morning the members of the St. Martin partit were furious over this move of their rivals. They grumbled to me that now only a miracle could save the band programme they had been planning. It was the main topic of conversation in the village that day. Many people were on hand to watch the St. Martin committee members enter the parish priest's house that afternoon. Soon after, the rival delegation, headed by the vice-president, the secretary and the treasurer of the St. Roque Band Club, joined the meeting. The first session lasted two hours. I saw the young priest shortly afterwards. He looked rather stunned, and exclaimed, 'They can't agree. They both want to escort me to my house! It's like a U.N. session. Nothing is settled and we meet again in an hour.' I learned later that he had had a difficult time preventing the rivals from coming to blows.

They met again, but the deadlock remained unbroken. The St. Martin delegates maintained that their club had the right to escort the priest to his house because it was the oldest, it represented the official patron saint of the village and it had been the only one to play during the past two installation ceremonies. Their rivals rejected all these claims, and suggested that they draw lots for the privilege of playing last, or hire outside bands to play, and let them decide. The St. Martin representatives rejected these suggestions. Finally, at midnight, the parish priest put an end to the wrangle. He told them that unless they could decide the matter among themselves, he would have to decline their offers to play for him. He asked them to let him have their decision by the following evening.

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575 578 621 743 The next day each delegation called separately on Dun Frangisk and told him that they had not been able to reach a decision. In fact, they had not met again. St. Martin supporters were very bitter about the whole affair, and said that since they could not play, they would also cancel the firework display they had been planning.

The installation ceremony took place three days later as planned. Neither band played, but each fired off a number of petards during the day, and each gave the newly installed priest a rousing salute of fire crackers on his return from the church. The leaders of both partiti attended his reception, separately to be sure, and they were very cordial in their congratulations. The skirmish was over. St. Martin leaders admitted to me that Dun Frangisk had handled himself well, and that he had taken the only sensible course open to him. They declared, however, that he should not have called in person to invite the St. Roque club, but should have sent the more usual printed invitation. The St. Roque leaders, on the other hand, were quite pleased with the way things had gone. They invited Dun Frangisk to a reception in his honour at their club the following week, and shortly afterwards asked him to support their request for a new platform for their saint.

This whole episode must be seen as an attempt by the St. Roque partit to unseat its rival from the position of pre-eminence it had enjoyed during the centenary celebration. It could do this by blocking the St. Martin club's plan to be the only band to play at the installation ceremony. The St. Roque leaders were able to make their first move when Dun Frangisk called in person at their club, thereby assuring them that they be given equal standing with the other, which they felt had been favoured by his predecessor. They would not have made their offer to play if there had been the slightest indication that Dun Frangisk was going to favour their rivals. In fact it is extremely unlikely that the St. Roque club was really planning to play. It had not done so for many years, it had no bandsmen and at the time it did not even have a bandmaster. Finally, it had made no collection to pay for a band. All these facts were known to the St. Martin supporters when they [521] made their offer to play. Furthermore, they had heard indirectly from the St. Roque secretary – who told a policemen in a neighbouring town, who in turn mentioned it to the president of the

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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St. Martin club – that the St. Roque club was not planning to participate in the ceremony in protest against the way they had been treated during the centenary. Dun Frangisk's spontaneous move upset their plans.

Although Dun Frangisk favoured the suggestions that the clubs draw lots, or hire outside bands, St. Martin rejected both because they implied that the clubs had equal status. The last time the St. Roque band had played was six years and four parish priests before, when the local police inspector had devised a compromise solution, and the St. Martin leaders had 'allowed' St. Roque to play the last march of the day, while their band escorted the new priest home. They believed any concession they made now would undo the advantage which they felt they had gained as the only functioning band in the village during the past six years.

Thus it came about that no band played at Dun Frangisk's installation ceremony. This greatly surprised the many visitors from the city and the suburbs, but the good people of the district found it quite in accordance with the way things should be, considering the issues involved. At no point in the series of events were the feelings of the young priest, whom all liked, ever considered. His installation had become the vehicle for a clash between the followers of St. Martin and St. Roque. They had been vying with each other for supremacy long before he was born, and would be at it long after he left. Any concessions made for his sake would have to be entered into the eighty-year-old ledger of credits and debits, and might have an important bearing on the outcome of the next series of encounters.

III

Two interesting problems remain to be considered: why festa partiti arose during the fifty years or so after 1850, and what reasons prompted people to join one partit rather than its rival. The factors which caused the partiti to come into existence at this particular period in Maltese history are necessarily complex, and they are dimmed by the time that has elapsed since their foundation. Nonetheless, one can discern several elements which would appear to be related to the general problem. To begin with, during this period there was a sudden increase in the devotion to the Virgin Mary following her apparition in 1858 at Lourdes, and the

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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In addition to the many new confraternities dedicated to
103 him, after 1850 (in Naxxar, Għargħur, Kirkop and Xagħra, for
175 example) he was chosen as patron of the new parish churches of
621, Kalkara, Qala and Msida. Moreover, four parishes have secondary
776 feasts dedicated to him (Rabat, Għaxaq, Kirkop and Żebbuġ).
794 Besides these Għargħur and Siġġiewi had St. Joseph partiti which
796 succumbed to the 1935 Church regulations.

The identification of secondary partiti in general with St.
621 Joseph is also perhaps reflected in the colour most have chosen as
794 their symbol. It is blue, the colour of the banner of the Con-
822 fraternity of St. Joseph. The supporters of many secondary partiti, even if their saint is the Virgin Mary, wave blue scarves about to show their loyalty to it. Their rivals display red scarves, after the colour of the banner of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, whose members support the titular saint.

463 The correlation between partiti and occupational class is also
621 shown in the high proportion of village priests who are sons of
793, families supporting the titular feasts. I once asked the leader of a
794 secondary partit why this was so. He replied that it was only natural since the families of the titular partiti were in much closer contact with the parish priest. Thus their sons, rather than those of rivals, more often became his young helpers and altar boys and received the necessary recommendations to the seminary and other church-run schools. From there, some became priests, and others assumed positions of leadership with the various associations. Other informants suggested it was because the 'best' families support the titular saints, and therefore can afford the additional school fees and loss of earning power that are involved in having their sons become priests.

Of the 41 priests born and now resident in Żurrieq, Kirkop, Qrendi, Mqabba, Luqa, Għaxaq and Żebbuġ, 33 (80 per cent) are sons of families supporting the titular feasts. This percentage gains added importance by the fact that in each of these villages the secondary partit is either equal to or larger than the titular partit. The exception is Żebbuġ, where the secondary partit is decidedly smaller than the titular one. In Farruġ, though the local priest is from a St. Roque family, all the offices connected with the parish church, and 23 of the 30 key positions with Catholic Action, the Football Club and the Labour Committee, are in the hands of St. Martin supporters. Thus the members of titular partiti are not only closer to established authority, they often become part of it.

[i.e. St. Joseph, - Analyst]

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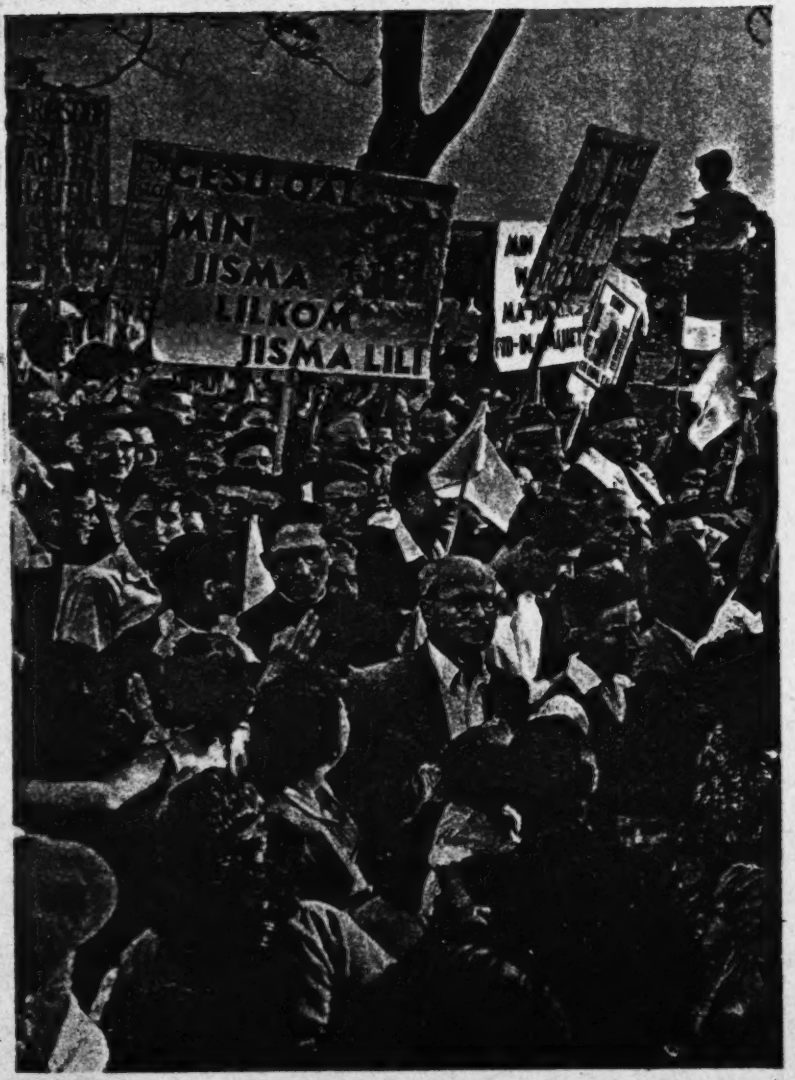

7. Demonstrations of loyalty to the Archbishop

[facing P. 96]

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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young, I cannot even vote in the next election. But I must think of the future. I feel that Mintoff is doing what is right for Malta. He helped the poor people when he made the government. The Church fights Mintoff because she fears she will lose her privileges and power if he wins, and that he will tax her property. The Church is in favour of keeping people ignorant, and limiting their education. Why? Because when people are educated they think for themselves and can judge. They no longer follow blindly. Besides, you should not take too seriously all this talk of Communism – they are products of this fight. In a fight, people use all means available.'

The street sweeper who was with us understood most of the conversation and shook his head in disagreement. His only comment was the proverb, 'A ship with two captains can't sail' (*Il-vapur biż-żewġ kaptani ma jimxiex*). At this every one in the shop nodded in agreement, for both Labour and Church supporters had different captains in mind. Those who support the Archbishop look to him as the leader of the Maltese people. They make little distinction between Church and State. Labour supporters, in contrast, make a clear distinction. Mintoff is their candidate for head of State, and since they see the Archbishop as interfering with their choice, they accuse him of reaching out to control both Church and State.

II

At the village level, this conflict has brought about a bitter division. All societies and groups which are not formally identified with one side or the other, have been divided and weakened by politically based factions. The parish priest is the leader of those who support the Archbishop. His most enthusiastic followers are the clergy and the members of the lay societies. This group, with the other prominent villagers who make up the parish priest's circle, provide the hard core of the active opposition to the MLP. Considering the offices that they occupy and the societies to which they belong, it could hardly be otherwise. They usually meet in the club houses of the societies, but sometimes the older members meet in a particular café.

The hard core of the Labour group is made up of the officers of the local MLP Committee and the members who openly frequent the club. There is very little contact between the leaders and

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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hold. This is the accepted pattern of behaviour, not only in villages divided by festa partiti, but also in others which have disputes with the Church. But it is only in the villages with festa partiti that these disputes, and the related anti-clerical action, take place on a regularly recurring basis. In these villages, though people are devout in observing many details of their religion, constant opposition to the parish priest in matters connected with festas has led them to look upon a measure of anti-clericalism as part of their way of life.

The relative lack of respect for the clergy in these villages has been partly responsible for a rather high turnover of parish priests. It has been shown how uncomfortable festa partiti can make the life of a parish priest. This, plus the meagre living in the smaller parishes, prompts priests to look for openings in wealthier and less troublesome villages. The Church itself regards the small rural parishes as training or 'stepping-stone parishes', as a monsignor from the Curia once described them to me. But even as such, they are unpopular, and the Archbishop often has difficulty finding priests willing to take charge of them. Farrug, for example, has had six parish priests since 1953. The lack of continuity of Church leadership in these small, divided villages has tended to weaken its influence there and to foster a lack of respect for its authority.

In this social climate the anti-clericalism of the Labour Party fits without great difficulty. Labour supporters have already had experience as festa partisans in ignoring the commands of the Church, and in enduring the taunts and disapproval of their rivals in the other partit. For them anti-clericalism is nothing new, and they are thus not as vulnerable to public opinion and the sanctions of the Church as persons in villages which do not have this tradition of opposition to the Church.

But if there is a certain similarity between the anti-clerical behaviour of many festa enthusiasts and that of MLP supporters, most persons make a distinction between the two. The anti-clerical actions of the festa partiti are usually directed against particular clerics in connection with specific decisions. In contrast, the anti-clericalism of the Labour Party is directed at the Archbishop in particular and often at all priests in general. This difference stems from the fact that basically their challenge to the authority of the Church differs significantly. Where the festa partisan does

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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178 578 621 across the village and the clubs, and has brought about conflict within many families. People lament the change that has come over the village as a result. An old bachelor friend often used to complain that had we come to live there just a few years ago, 'before politics came and spoiled everything', we would have found the village a far happier place. Picnics and outings were more frequent then, and groups of friends used to gather on hot summer evenings and stroll outside the village to play guitars and sing the lilting Maltese *ghana* in the cool air away from the houses. [575] There was also more life in the clubs. Both the Social Club and [796] the Band Club used to take part in the national carnival competition for the best decorated carts and costumed companies. But as the political conflict has divided the island's carnival celebration in two, so it has also affected the clubs. They now celebrate neither the government's carnival nor that of the MLP for fear the question of which one to participate in would provoke a fight that would cripple the club.

578 665 793 794 Dun Bert, the parish priest in Kortin, is of course the head of the local group which supports the Archbishop and opposes the MLP. His chief lieutenants in the fight are the local clergy and the lay leaders of the religious associations. Pawlu and Anton, his two faithful helpers, are also vocal partisans, as is old Manwel. Dr. Farrugia, old Manwel's son, as a former member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) and a leading member of one of the political parties opposed to the MLP, also belongs to the pro-Church division in the village, though he takes little part in its day-to-day affairs. The main activity and support comes from the leaders of 275 578 the lay associations, especially of the Young Christian Workers, the MUSEUM and the Sodality of Our Lady. These all meet regu- 665 larly in their respective premises. Many of the others, older men, 794 spend much of their free time in Kelinu's café. These include old Manwel, Pawlu, Anton, the sacristan, the organist, and Dun Mikiel and Dun Filip, respectively the chaplains of the female and male sections of Catholic Action. This café, located right next to Dr. Farrugia's house, is the nicest café on the square, or in the village for that matter. It is the only one which the clergy, the teachers and occasionally Dr. Farrugia himself, frequent. It is thus the headquarters of the more influential village citizens who support the Archbishop. Most MLP supporters have stopped going to [547] it, although a few still play cards there for an hour or so in the late afternoon when they return from work.

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557 602 patrons; others have established fairly close contact with them through business relations.

557 793 The patronage of the parish priest has traditionally been important. Not only are all villagers his spiritual clients, but he is also a source of charity and assistance in many fields. He serves his parishioners individually in the capacity of legal adviser, character reference and often also as letter-writer and banker. He frequently argues their claims against the government. He also represents the interests of the community at large, and attempts, often successfully, to obtain improved public amenities such as new roads, street lighting and so on. At least, this is the role that he occupied until the introduction of representative government.

III

557 662 Influence through the networks of personal relations and patrons is the traditional method of handling contacts with authority. It still operates when representative government is in abeyance. But the advent of elected government introduced a new set of relations, and provided a new focus of power. Political parties and professional politicians provided new and surer channels of influence and sources of patronage, though they have not replaced the old ones. The villager now uses both old and new channels, separately or together.

662 665 The organization of all parties, at least before Mintoff reorganized the Labour Party, was rather simple. Party interests were represented in the villages by personal canvassers or party agents, as well as by the candidates themselves. The old Labour Party under Paul Boffa had a number of village party committees. When the party was returned to power, patronage and influence flowed abundantly, and brought the whole structure into vigorous life. The canvassers became important people who could pass along requests and schedule appointments with the local MLA's and even the Ministers. They also helped the local MLA's prepare the lists of people who were to be given jobs, for until 1955 most of the lower-grade industrial labourers with the Public Works Department were employed upon the recommendation of the local MLA's. Politicians who held office before 1955 often told me that making out the employment rosters and dealing with the daily queue of job-seekers were among their most difficult and

[464] [653]

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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forwarding the requests and complaints of the villagers to government had greatly increased their strength, and that of the party they represented. As the members operated as a formal committee and not as individuals, they had the esteem and respect of most of the community. They also had considerable power in local affairs. In fact, for three years the leaders of the Labour group in the village ranked alongside the parish priest and the professionals as the most prominent and influential citizens of the village. The canvassers of the rival parties had perhaps had power, but they had never had respect. Theirs was always rather an underhanded operation, that was often disowned by MLA's when they were confronted with it. The MLP, on the other hand, delegated responsibility to Local Committees, and the Ministers legitimized them by openly working through them in all their relations with the villages. Villagers were also openly encouraged to work through them. These committees thus served the ends of the Labour Party most successfully. It is quite likely, therefore, that in the future other parties will find it politically as well as administratively expedient to develop and work through village committees patterned on the model so successfully tested by the Labour Party.

The party system has come into direct conflict with the traditional relations between patron and client at relatively few points. This is largely because most patrons who desired to were able to move successfully into the new field of party politics. A notable exception are priests, who are no longer permitted by their Bishops to stand for national political office. Their power to influence authority has thus been weakened by the new source of patronage and influence open to their parishioners. In particular, parish priests came into open conflict with the village MLP committees during the Labour Party's time in power after 1955. Not surprisingly, their clash at the village level mirrored the dispute between the Archbishop and the MLP at the national level. That is, it was a conflict between the religious authority of the Church and the secular authority of the State, represented in the villages by the Local Committees of the Labour Party. Both the parish priest and the Local Committee claimed to represent the village, and both sought by mobilizing their supporters to advance their claim at the expense of their opponents. This invariably resulted in a struggle for power during which the Labour supporters were

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accused of being anti-clerical and against the Church because they opposed the will of the parish priest.

Shortly after Mintoff took office, the Local Committee in Kortin made plans to open a new avenue into the village. The scheme, first projected by government planners over sixty years before, was designed to ease the flow of traffic through the village and provide a wide, tree-lined promenade leading to the main square in front of the church. Unfortunately, the project required the demolition of four buildings, two of which were small chapels used as warehouses for the festa decorations. Because of this Dun Bert, the parish priest, bitterly opposed the scheme, as had his predecessors. He claimed that most of the village supported him. The Labour Committee, on the other hand, felt that it had the backing of the village, and went ahead with the project. The road was finally opened, and it proved to be a great success. But the two small churches were destroyed, and the relations between the Labour group and the parish priest remained hostile. Six years later, Dun Bert and his supporters were still pointing to the avenue as positive proof that the Labour Party is fundamentally opposed to the Church.

IV

But if the political parties have modified the traditional system of patronage somewhat by providing a new channel of influence for the villager, the professional politician of today is by and large the same traditional patron. That is, the successful politicians are largely drawn from the professional classes; they are still the doctors, the lawyers, the architects and the chemists. Indeed, until recently the lists of candidates often read like directories of the professional classes. This situation prevailed until about the time of the Labour Party split in 1949, when virtually all the professional class Labour MLA's sided with Dr. Boffa and formed the Workers' Party, while most of the MLP Executive and the rank and file supported Mintoff. After this the Labour Party asked people from all classes to stand as candidates, and began to push up working-class leaders trained in union and club politics. But the politicians from the professional class still heavily outnumber their working-class colleagues, even in the Labour Party.

Table 8 below illustrates this. Of the fifty MLA's elected in the

6:Beeley K-5 (1957-1958) 1959 EZ6 Malta EZ6

361 Map 3, showing density of population by localities for 1957, closely reflects the built-up area pattern. Broadly-speaking it resembles Map 4 (residence of Dockyard workers) but here the emphasis on Valletta and Sliema, and all the northern part of the Urban zone, is notably less.

THE VILLAGE

621 [361] Maltese rural society is essentially composed of village communities each occupying a compact settlement[8]. There are some three dozen villages in the rural area of the Islands[9] among which there is considerable variation in site, date of foundation, morphology, population (B/561) and economic structure (B/381), but throughout the Islands there is a uniformity of function within the village as a community group. This makes it possible to speak of "the Maltese Village" from the point of view of social structure, and allows a qualifying classification into types on the basis of the features mentioned.

17 Maltese society as a whole, and particularly the rural part of it, is to some extent cut off from outside influences by virtue of the insular position of the country, cultural as well as geographical. Yet the Islands have clearly at no time in their history been independent of Europe to the north, Africa to the south and Asia to the east. Quite patently the opposite has been the case and Malta, as ever the mute pawn of great powers, has absorbed its material and moral culture from abroad just as it has received additions to its population whether coming as traders, invaders, or settlers, for four thousand years. But the Islands have put their own stamp on these arrivals so that a discussion such as this must take account of both autochthonous developments within the Islands, as well as those of wider origin.

17 621 The elements within the traditional Maltese village were, briefly, the Roman Catholic Church and clergy, the landed class, and the mass of the population - an illiterate peasantry. 'Traditional' here refers to rural society as it existed in Malta one, two or three centuries ago.

This is not to say that the traditional has been erased from the present scene but rather that recent moves towards literacy, emancipation and communication, and a greater range of amenities within the Islands, have diversified and modified the traditional aspects to produce a variety of different types in place of the social uniformity of the past. But the traditional nucleus within the village, the Parish Priest and the Parish Church retain their pivotal role. The modification of this role is very apparent but the place of the Church has been affected far less in the country districts

● [793] [795]

of Malta and Gozo than in the towns, where dockyard developments and other industrialization have produced a new kind of social environment. This is an important subject in itself but, for the present, attention is to be confined to the rural districts where change has to date been slower than in the towns but where the same factors are appearing now along with the rapid 'urbanization' of the villages.

In traditional Malta the function of the clergy[10] extended far beyond matters of religion. The priests were the teachers, doctors, and legal advisers as well as spiritual guardians of the people. Government-organized education began in the nineteenth century. Previously such formal education as there was had been under ecclesiastical auspices. The clergy were literate when almost all the rest of the population was not. This concentration of learning produced a situation in which only the clergy were able to step forward to take the lead among Maltese, for the nobility, which might have been expected to provide a focus and leadership, tended to be more Italian or Spanish than Maltese. Even revolutionary leaders came from the ranks of the clergy; the Mannarino Revolt against the Order of St. John (1775) and the rising against the French during the brief occupation of the Islands by Napoleon (1798-1800) are instances.

For some centuries before the arrival of the British in 1800, the Church had built up its dominating position in both village and town. Even the educated townsman going to the University came strongly under the influence of the Church, for the University, itself a Jesuit foundation of long standing, was and still is best known for its Theology. However, during the nineteenth century, the major changes within the Church of Malta were connected with purely administrative details of keeping pace with the rapidly rising population[1].

Many new parishes were created in the second half of the nineteenth century and in the early part of the twentieth. The Archbishopric of Malta was established in 1831 with the separation from the jurisdiction of Palermo, and the Bishopric of Gozo was founded in 1863. A movement of great sociological importance during the present century has been the growth of the Lay Apostolate in the Islands, especially in the urban areas. This represents a counter-attack against the forces which are today tending to detract from the traditional omnipotence of the Church. It is only a matter of time before the problems which the Church is facing in the towns will loom much larger than at present in the country districts and in Gozo[11].

565 The landed classes in Malta and particularly the nobility have never taken any considerable part in the communal life of the villages in which they maintain their country seats and draw rents from the lands which they own. They have always been more urban than rural and more European than Maltese. A [793] squirearchy on the English pattern has been lacking, and the functions which, in the English village, fell to the squire have, in Malta, come within the wide range of activities of the Parish Priest.

621 795 565 Apart from the clergy[10] and the gentry, the greater part of the population of the traditional village in Malta was made up of the peasantry deriving their livelihood directly or indirectly from the land or in some cases the sea. Within this section of the community homogeneity was the keynote. There was one Church. All the populace were Church members and attended the same services at the same times each day of every [203] week. The Church could therefore be the centre of diffusion of news to the villagers - both relating to farming and to general affairs in and out of the village.

621 565 241 423 [611] [591] Within the village the peasant and his family, patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal, worked the few tmien of land held on rent or lease: rarely was much of it owned by the cultivator. The work of the farm and of the household went on as a single unit (Section 2). The two were often located within the same cluster of buildings (Case VI, v. Plan). Clearly some farmers were richer than others, some had more land, some more animals, but accepted stratification within the village went no further than this: there was no middle class between priest and farmer.

628 197 For the peasant, the bounds of his regular experience were the limits of the village. Contact between villages, even where close together, was slight and invariably less than that between the individual village and Valletta. Evidence of this is found in the dialect differences between villages but equally illuminating is the fact that the basic dialect distinction that can be made is that between the Urban area, with its Italianized vocabulary and intonation, and the rural parts of the Islands with their characteristically broader vowels, harsher gutturals and fewer European words and idioms (B/Aquilina, J). Language is but one aspect of rural culture in the Maltese Islands which reveals the essential independence of the village within the traditional rural scene. Village patriotism is expressed in inter-Parish 628 186 rivalry and in a variety of regional reputations, proverbs, [794] and local lore. Thus the shrewdness of the inhabitants of Rabat is revealed by the saying that "A man from Rabat is worth two Jews"[12]. The men of Żebbuġ (Malta) are acknowledged to be merchants par excellence however, while those of Qormi

628 are alleged heavy drinkers[12]. The notion held in Gozo that a
186 man of Nadur claims to be more Maltese than Gozitan is held to point to the settlement of that village from Malta at some comparatively recent date[13].

621 Whatever the differences of size, settlement, economic
793 structure or tradition the functional basis of the Maltese
795 village remains pivoted on the Church and the Parish Priest, and a detailed discussion of the present scene becomes largely an attempt to assess the part now played vis-à-vis the Church by the new features and modifications of the old landscape in the present.

175 Here we may consider the history and growth of a young
361 Maltese village, MGARR, to show how this growing settlement has acquired the essential features common to rural society throughout the Islands (Map 5).

Until the nineteenth century, Malta north of the Victoria Lines had remained without any large settlements, partly on account of the vulnerability of the area to attack from the sea. This is not to say that there was no human activity in the area before 1800 for there is evidence of a small church [172] in what is now Mgarr as far back as 1580[14]. Evidence, too, of life in other eras is provided by the temple of Bu Hagrat (2,000 B.C.) and the remains of a Roman house near the village.

175 However, in the early part of the nineteenth century,
361 farmers from Mosta began to cultivate the land in what is now
793 the Parish of Mgarr. The account, of the history of one of
795 the families concerned in this settlement, given by Mitchell (B/525), is typical. The numbers involved in the general movement increased as the century advanced until, in 1898, an independent Parish was established. Before 1898, spiritual needs of the farmers were catered for by visiting priests from Żebbuġ, Balzan, Mdina and Mosta itself and the tiny Church of St. Mary was used throughout this period and until 1918. Earlier in the nineteenth century the colonization of Mgarr had been a 'week-day' venture with most farmers returning to their families and homes in Mosta for the week-end and the Sunday Mass. The visiting priests celebrated Sunday morning Mass for those farmers who began to settle in the area per-
175 manently. With the granting of parochial status in 1898, a
346 full-time Parish Priest was appointed who came from Mosta and
[793] settled in the growing village. The first concern was for a new Church and work was begun in 1912, although the popula-
[463] tion of the village at this time was only 1,067 (B/167-1911). Significantly, both the master mason and the architect concerned were Mosta men. Building went ahead slowly on the

[Village of Mġarr]

Building went ahead slowly on the

175 346 794 immense construction as costs were defrayed by private subscription in kind and in money, and the villagers were themselves responsible for much of the labouring work. Money and farm produce of every variety was given towards the cost which, in 1939, had passed £10,000 (B/54 - 12.8.1939); this in a parish which even ten years later had no more than 2,218 people (B/167 - 1948).

175 793 871 With the growth of Mġarr, assistant priests were attached to the Parish, notably Father (later Monsignor) Edgar Salamone, who went to the village in 1920 and became Parish Priest a decade later. The work of this one priest not only pays him personal tribute but illustrates the way in which Mġarr acquired the characteristics and features possessed by other villages of much longer standing in the Islands, with the Church itself as the prime consideration and focus of energy and resources. Mgr. Salamone was "sickened by the ignorance and backwardness of the people of Mġarr"[15] and set about establishing some sort of schooling in the village. He acquired premises, used at week-ends by the part-time village barber, and opened a school in 1920 for [658] about 40 children and adults. Three years later a Government [671] elementary school was opened (19.9.1923) and support for this still novel feature of the village grew fast enough for nearly all children to be attending when the Compulsory Attendance Act was passed in 1926.

744 793 759 175 At this time the health of the villagers was cared for by a Dispensary which opened once a week and by Mgr. Salamone himself. A statement in the Malta Legislative Assembly of 1933 observed that the Priest of Mġarr kept "a medicine chest of his own and people used to call on him at all hours of the day and night. He used to pack up his medical kit and go to anyone's bedside, whenever he was called for" (B/291, p.6). As in all things the villagers turned to their Priest in difficulty or trouble whether spiritual, medical or social, as had been the custom for centuries. In 1933, however, the first medical officer for Mġarr began his duties in the village, and another of the traditional functions of the Priest passed to specialist hands.

175 346 344 [435] After this, interest was turned again to building and the spacious esplanade in front of the Church was laid out in 1935, followed by a nearby construction to house the Police Station, Post Office, Government Dispensary and the District Medical Officer. Once again the villagers themselves were responsible for a great deal of the building work, as they were in the case of the Church which continued to grow until its completion and dedication in 1948 - at a 000 total cost of some £16,000[15]. By the mid-thirties Mġarr had

6:Beeley K-5 (1957-1958) 1959 EZ6 Malta EZ6

654 829 464 178 (ii) The younger generation are not interested in improving farming; they scarcely stop to think that any changes in the industry might be possible in their present anxiety to find a new job in a different walk of life. Thus they will probably not be available to take over Maltese agriculture, improved or otherwise, from their fathers.

SECTION 5 : Conclusions.

369 In conclusion one may attempt to draw together the several general points raised in the previous four Sections. The most important of these may be listed as follows:

(1) The twentieth century is witnessing an accelerating process of the 'urbanization' of rural Malta and Gozo (Section 1). This comprises

(a) material change (the development of electricity, roads, sewage, transport, and a variety of other amenities),

(b) cultural change following general, elementary education - that is literacy, 'emancipation' and the emergence of a critical public awareness,

[565] (c) social and economic changes which have laid the foundations of a rural middle class, unknown in the traditional village scene. ●[193] Along with this have come modifications in the pivotal rôle of the Parish Priest and other priests. Some of their traditional functions, notably teaching and caring for the sick, have been taken over by specialists in such fields.

369 829 The factors outlined under (a), (b), and (c) are tending to extend the horizon of the individual villager far beyond the limits of his own village. Whereas he used to work and think within his family and village he is now aware of Malta and beyond.

241 464 178 (2) The particular physical limitations on farming in the Islands have, in the past, made the industry dependent to a very considerable extent on the meticulous hand-labour of the industrious Maltese farmer. This has been necessary not only in cultivation itself but also in the maintenance, and even construction, of the fields and terraces themselves (Section 2). The present younger generation of the farming community is showing itself unwilling to accept the life and work which conditions such as these involved. They have benefited from general elementary education, literacy, and contact with the world outside the villages to the extent of demanding work which seems to them economically and socially rewarding. The past twenty-five years have seen a rapid decline in the number of full-time farmers and farm-workers. Today the farmer, in most cases no longer assisted by his sons, finds hired labour both scarce and costly (Section 2).

*159 As village-weighman he has a high social standing in the
829 district. His literacy, spacious house, and herd of cows
178 further enhance his status. He maintains that within the
[554] village the place of the Parish priest is as over it was
[793] "in spite of the new learning". He notes that the increas-
[626] sing number of dissenting voices in the village are kept firmly in their place by the pressure of public opinion but that political rivalry, a comparatively recent feature in
[177] the village, is growing. The returning emigrant brings new ideas - including some on religion - but the strength of the Church remains much less questioned than is the case in
[794] the towns. Censu shares the still general view that money given to the Church is "payment towards the good of the
[651] community". Money paid to the Government in the form of taxes would, on the other hand, be regarded as an imposition bringing no benefit to the individual, and therefore to be avoided.

CASE XII : Summary.

*159 (A cows' milk producer and village weighman.)

423 A. Land.
427 33 Tmien in Mqabba-Kirkop Plain:
4 Field plots in 3 parcels, on Terra Rossa Soils and Xero-Rendzinas.
All leased from 2 landlords: Total rent £34 per annum.

*159 B. Utilisation.
241 Over 5 Tmien wasteland.
Main concentration on fodder, which accounted for 74% crop area in 1957/58, as against only 33% in 1956/57 winter season.
2 tmien under barley - pulled green.
3 tmien under sulla.
6½ tmien under vetches.
5 tmien under wheat.
c.10 tmien under potatoes.
Remainder under vegetables, prickly pear and fallow.
Main cash crops potatoes and onions.

*159 C. Livestock.
231 Late 1957 - 13 head of cattle (10 milch cows, 2 calves,
234 1 service bull). All Maltese Friesian. 10 goats; 1 ewe; 2 horses; 50 poultry; rabbits.
This herd was built up from 6 goats, 4 sheep and 1 cow in 1938.

*159 D. Capital.
[423] - No freehold land. Owns large village house.
[454] - No statement as to capital reserves but general evi-
[407] dence suggests a sum of the order of £1500.
- Equipment - no machinery, but normal range of local tools.

*159 E. Labour.
464 - Family labour - one 30 year old son.
- In 1956 male hired labour amounted to 60 days, and
[465] female to 90 days.
Cost - men c.£1 a day, women c.14/- a day.
Hand labour almost entirely for sowing during autumn and winter and harvesting in early summer.
[427] - Hires heavy tractor plow, rotary cultivator and
241 threshing machine each year. Costs of contract
[407] plowing 15/- to £1 a tmien.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

796 offered during the year, for the purpose
794 either of decorating or repairing the
798 church or churches of the parish to
431 which they belong.
354

It is also customary for every parish priest—on this special day, or on the day following—to present both the Bishop and the Governor of the Island with a
[643] two lb. candle. It is to be observed, however, that the candle given to the Governor is only a blessed one when he happens to profess the Roman Catholic Religion.

178 This giving of candles to both the
796 Bishop and the Governor—a continua-
354 tion of a custom that prevailed in the
793 time of the Order of St. John of Jeru-
431 salem, when the Grand Master was annually presented with a blessed candle on this day—is meant as a token of respect to each of the highest Ecclesiastical and Civil dignitaries of the Island.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

796 lebrating their Passover, placed on the
262 table two unleavened cakes called "pass-
171 over cakes" (*) with hard boiled eggs
194 bound in with slips of paste cross ways on them (†)

Hyde, in his "Oriental Sports" says that the Christians buy eggs at Easter and stain them with a red colour, in memory of the blood of Christ shed for us at the time of the Crucifixion.

That the Roman Catholic Church has considered eggs as emblematical of the Resurrection may be gathered from the Ritual.

St. GREGORY'S DAY
General procession

796
•793 This very popular feast, which takes place on the first Wednesday after

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(*) The *figolla*.
(†) Brand's "Popular Antiquities."

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

Easter, is celebrated by a general procession composed of the fraternities and Clergy of all the parishes of the Island, led by the Chapter of the Cathedral followed by His Grace the Bishop of the Diocese. 796 [793]

The solemn chiming of the bells of all the parishes in the Island at sunset, on the day before, and the lighting of a large fire on the top of Cathedral church at Notabile, about 10 at night, warns the faithful to gather early on the following morning (Wednesday) in their respective parish church to start for the annual procession. [262]

At about 7 o'clock in the morning, Casal Paula is literally thronged with thousands of people from all parts of the Island, awaiting instructions as to the marching and ordering of the grand procession.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

Infant Jesus. The third man was constantly employed in burning perfumes. The bride and bridegroom followed, walking under a canopy of crimson velvet carried by four of the principal persons who attended the wedding. The rest of the relations and invited friends, called the *Haddara* closed the procession. 585

The arrival of the bridal procession at the church was announced by the ringing of bells. The officiating priest was then presented with a basin containing a cake, a handkerchief, and two bottles of wine—the usual fee on such occasions. When the marriage ceremony was completed, everyone returned from church in the same order as before. [202] [793] [465]

As the newly married couple wended their way to their house, the women and girls who crowded the balconies show-

8:Brockman T-5 (no date) 1938
EZ6 Malta EZ6

The officiating priest was then presented with a basin containing a cake, a handkerchief, and two bottles of wine—the usual fee on such occasions. When the marriage ceremony was completed, everyone returned from church in the same order as before. 585 [793] [465]

As the newly married couple wended their way to their house, the women and girls who crowded the balconies showered flowers upon them also nuts and grains and wheat, and on their entering the house one of the kinsfolk threw from one of the windows or balcony a few handfuls of barley and some small coins on their heads.

The nuptial feast took place immediately afterwards; but the bride ate in a separate apartment. The repast being ended, she was seated next to her husband and drank out of the same cup.

At a village wedding the company danced during the feast, each dancer throwing a piece of money to the fiddlers and each guest contributing a fowl to the repast. [535] [431] [465]

The bride always passed a week in her father's house, after which she was received with much pomp by her husband, whose relations gave a great feast which was called *il hargia*."[1] [591]

The bridegroom's symbolic present of a fish is very likely connected with fecundity, for the fish was regarded as an emblem of fecundity by the Assyrians and the Phoenicians. It is not, however, in this connection alone that the fish is a potent symbol. Prudence (apparently a virtue highly prized in a Maltese wife—Salt, another symbol of prudence, is included in the ingredients with which the bride's lips are anointed), and Wisdom were anciently supposed to be the properties of numerous Sacred Fish. Finn M'Cull, in the Irish legend, "Happens upon the Salmon of Knowledge . . ." 584 174 825 [577].

[1] BUSUTTIL, op. cit.

8:Brockman T-5 (no date) 1938
EZ6 Malta EZ6

The fratelli
763 —lay brethren of the congregation—hurry from their homes
794 to take their places in the procession of the Viatecum. Marching rapidly, like a company of soldiers, headed by a peasant ringing a staccato, commanding bell, some bearing tapers, some censers, all chanting the prayers for the dying, they pass
• [793] quickly through the village street. Under a canopy, borne by two sturdy *fratelli*, goes the priest in his bright vestments, bearing God to the dying man.

The women hurry to place a light in their windows, kneel and pray as God passes.

So, with such poor pomp as these simple folk can muster,
764 the Prince of Peace comes to dying Zeppu. The funeral rites
[171] and customs differ hardly at all nowadays from those of other Catholic countries. But Zeppu's grandfather could remember a time when the Old Things were much in evidence.

764 There were the "Wailing Women" (whose name *neuuieha*
767 survives in the sense of "one who constantly complains"). They wore long black robes, and chanted death-songs whose burden was a combination of praise for the deceased's virtues and rebuke for his having left them. They cut the vines from the courtyard, overturned the furniture, broke pottery, and mixed the fragments with soot and ashes, staining the doors
[302] of the bereaved house with the mixture. They cut pieces of their hair and scattered them over the coffin.

765 If the dead man possessed horses, cows, goats, all their tails
[262] had pieces cut from them in token of mourning. There was a
[764] form of "wake" where funeral cakes and boiled wheat were eaten. A carpet was spread over the tomb to prevent the unware from treading on it.

[372] No fire was lit in the house for three days after the funeral.
[302] The women kept to the house for forty days. The men, having remained indoors for seven days, went unshaven.

764 Here are clear signs of the most primitive funeral rites
174 and *taboos*. Death was a pollution—hence the segregation of

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

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BUST OF G.M. CARDINAL DE VERDALLE
[See p. 190.]

VERDALA CASTLE
[See pp. 187–191.]

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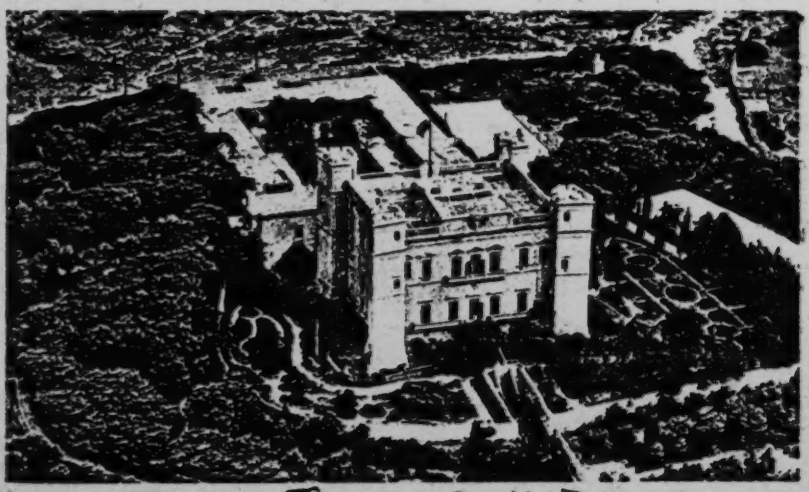

[facing P. 160]

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

CHAPTER XVIII

Old Survivals in Modern Malta

MALTA OCCUPIES A PLACE OF ITS OWN IN THE OLD WORLD not only by reason of the length and unusual character of its annals, not only by reason of the tremendous range of its architectural monuments. It does so because it combines with these features the circumstance that it is the home of a separate race, the smallest of European peoples.

There are, it is true, four independent states in Europe of lesser size than Malta, but the inhabitants of these states do not form distinct racial stocks, nor have they their own languages. The Maltese are the smallest nation with the longest history, and their islands are a microcosm, self-contained. Not only has Malta its own tongue. It has its own University—the oldest in the British Commonwealth Overseas and granted the Royal patronage and the prefix "Royal" by King George VI in his coronation year—with seven faculties: Theology, Laws, Medicine and Surgery, Dental Surgery, Engineering and Architecture, Arts, Science. It has, as we have seen, its own Nobility with their Committee of Privileges. It is an ecclesiastical Province whose Archbishop exercises jurisdiction since 1944 over the bishopric of Gozo, previously immediately subject to the Holy See since its formation in 1864. And in the history of this microcosm has been mirrored the life of the great world around it.

Viewed as a part of the British Commonwealth, Malta is unique in two particulars. It is the only British possession whose Government owns an Opera House and in normal times maintains an annual opera season and conducts the pawnbroking of the nation in the manner of certain Continental states.

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

If the Church in Malta thus lost its right of granting asylum, its Head acquired at an even earlier stage of the British occupation another right which is carefully preserved to the present day. In 1801 Major-General Pigot, then in charge of the administration and in command of the troops, issued the following Standing Order to the "Garrison of La Valette and its Dependencies":

> His Eminence the Bishop of Malta is to receive from all guards honour due to a Brigadeer [*sic*] General.

When, after the First World War, the rank of Brigadier-General was abolished, the Archbishop of Malta was promoted, from the point of view of military compliments, to be a Major-General; and the guard never fails to turn out to him every day that he crosses the Palace Square.

It is sometimes said that the privilege was granted in recognition of the military services of Bishop Francis Xavier Caruana, who as Canon Caruana played a leading rôle in the rising against the French in 1798–1800. But this story is picturesque rather than probable, seeing that the salute to the Bishop was ordered in 1801 and Canon Caruana did not become Bishop of Malta until thirty years later. Its origin lay no doubt in the wish of the Occupying Power to demonstrate in a public manner its respect for the Church of Malta and its Head.

For the Roman Catholic Church is in Malta by law established; its canon law is, as in Quebec, the law of the land. It follows that contact between Church and State is close, and this contact is not confined, on the part of the representatives of the State, to relations with the hierarchy but is maintained equally with the parish clergy. The link finds its formal and public expression on the 2nd February of each year, the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the ceremony of Candlemas, the "Candelora." On the morning of this day all the parish priests, wearing their best cassocks, repair to the Palace in Valetta, and one

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

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[793]

core of Malta." The average Dockyard hand did not know if his job might not come to an end by the end of the year; and representatives of all classes in the country, including the parish priests, passed resolutions pressing for a guarantee of alternative employment if the Dockyard were to close down.

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In the following month the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr Lennox-Boyd, put forward a new proposal to avert the threatened deadlock. While adhering to the Integration policy, and to "equivalence" of the Maltese economy and standard of living as an ultimate aim, he proposed an experimental period or trial run of five years for the Maltese economy to approximate itself to that of the United Kingdom. During this period the British Government would afford economic assistance towards the attainment of this object, consisting of a grant of £25,000,000 over the five years; assistance with educational, health and other social services based on a percentage of what the Maltese were able to do for themselves; and an obligation to help if unemployment rose above the British level in consequence of Defence cuts. Meanwhile Maltese representation at Westminster would remain in abeyance.

Even so, Mr Mintoff was not satisfied. On the 14th December he tendered his resignation owing to a difference of opinion with a section of his supporters in the General Workers' Union but withdrew it three days later; and he then raised the cry of independence as the alternative if he failed to obtain Integration on his own financial terms. The Nationalist Opposition, which had combated Integration, proved ready to support the converse alternative, for on the 30th December 1957 their representatives in the Legislative Assembly voted for Mr Mintoff's Resolution threatening severance of the link with Britain, which was passed unanimously and with acclamation in the following terms:

That, as the British Government is not prepared to honour the obligation assumed by that Government, in the declaration

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

668 579 656 [468] A post-war phenomenon from which Malta is not immune is the Teddy-Boy, whose long locks and bizarre dress as he lounges about the capital faintly recall, if only in caricature, the flowing curls and exotic clothes in which the young Disraeli postured in the streets of Valetta in 1830. A one-day general strike called for the 28th April by the General Workers' Union as a "national protest" gave these and the late Prime Minister's other lawless supporters the opportunity for widespread rioting in which they demolished walls to make barricades and road-blocks, dislocated traffic, destroyed cars and other property and stoned the Police. One of the mobs wrecked and set fire to Zabbar Police Station. Nor was illegal action confined to the mobs. These received encouragement from above; two members of the Mintoff Ministry were convicted of intimidation and had their sentences upheld on appeal. The Police, no longer impeded in the performance of their duty by political pressure, behaved magnificently and with great restraint in the face of violent and sustained provocation.

In consequence of this disorder, whereby relatively small but carefully organized gangs of hooligans interrupted the lawful occasions of the vast majority of peaceful citizens, the prohibition of the holding of public meetings and demonstrations was extended for three months and applied to all Malta and Gozo. Another Proclamation declared a state of emergency which enabled the Governor to assume wider [793] powers for the maintenance of public order and safety. The Archbishop condemned violence in a timely broadcast.

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642 648 668 With the elimination of factors making for trouble the country settled down under the Governor's direct administration, and by November 1958 Mr Lennox-Boyd thought the time had come to initiate fresh discussions in London between himself, Sir Robert Laycock and the leaders